

A  
VINDICATION  
OF  
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

---

---

A Sermon,

PREACHED

AT BRIDPORT, ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 1812.

BEFORE THE

WESTERN UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

---

---

BY ROBERT ASPLAND.

---

---

K

*Nec religionis est cogere religionem, quæ sponte suscipi debet, non vi.*

*Tertullianus.*

*Quis mihi imponat necessitatem vel credendi quod nolim, vel quod velim non credendi?*

*Lactantius.*

*Nec imperiale est libertatem dicendi negare, nec sacerdotale quod sentias non dicere.*

*Ambrosius.*

*I have learnt from the ancient fathers of the church, that nothing is more against religion than to force religion.*

*Chillingworth.*

*Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.*

*Milton.*

---

HACKNEY:

PRINTED BY C. STOWER,

FOR J. JOHNSON & CO. ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,  
AND D. EATON, 187, HIGH HOLBORN.

---

1812.

1101132 E

AT BELMONT, ON MONDAY, JULY 17, 1910

222-22087

WESTERN MILITARY SOCIETY

BY ROBERT APPLEBY.



: 73723 B

FOR A. J. JONES, JR., 1000 N. 10TH ST., SPOKANE, IDAHO  
AND E. J. JONES, 1000 N. 10TH ST., SPOKANE, IDAHO

1992



**ADVERTISEMENT.**

---

**THE** following Sermon was preached to the author's own congregation at Hackney, on Sunday, April 12, 1812; to an Association of Unitarian Ministers, at Wisbeach, Cambridgeshire, Thursday, June 4th; and on occasion of opening a chapel for Unitarian worship at Brighton, on Wednesday, July 22d; as well as before the Western Unitarian Society, at Bridport, on Wednesday, June the 17th. It is now given to the public at the request of the two

Associations before whom it was delivered, and of individuals who heard it on the two other occasions. The concluding address differed at the several places mentioned: it is printed as it was preached at Bridport.

*Hackney, Sept. 1, 1812.*

THE following Sermon was preached to the author's own congregation at Hackney, on Sunday, April 19, 1812; to an Association of Unitarian Ministers, at Walsingham, Cambridgeshire, Thursday, June 11; and on occasion of opening a chapel for Unitarian worship at Brighton, on Wednesday, July 22d; as well as before the Western Unitarian Society, at Bridport, on Wednesday, June the 17th. It is now given to the public at the request of the two

A  
**SERMON,**

*&c.*

ROM. xiv. 5.

*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own  
mind.*

THE Roman Christians, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, differed in opinion concerning the observance of days and the use of meats, and fell, in consequence, into parties, who reproached and condemned each other. The apostle dictated this epistle, not with the vain hope of bringing them all to one mind, but with a view of persuading them to allow cheerfully the diversity of faith and practice which they could not prevent, and to give up the idle expectation of uniformity of belief, and to seek the real, attainable benefit of unity of spirit. He declares that a man's faith is to himself before God, and that he ought not to impose it upon his neighbour; and that in opposite opinions, held conscientiously and consistently followed, men may be equally acceptable to their Maker.

B



*Who art thou, he asks, that judgest another's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, (he adds, as if correcting himself, and recalling the admission that an honest man may suffer in his relation to God by mere opinion,) he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand.* The conclusion of his argument is expressed in the words first read,—*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; an admirable rule! worthy of a Christian apostle! honourable to Christianity! and entitled to respect from Christians in all times and all places!*

This apostolic direction is tantamount to an assertion of the full right of every individual, in all cases, to judge for himself in matters of religion.

The particular dispute which occasioned the apostle's interference related, indeed, to opinions of comparatively little moment; but if his authority were competent to decide greater differences, it was of course equal to the settlement of these; and he evidently forbore to attempt to sway his converts on the one side or the other, not because the subject of their disagreement was unimportant, but because he respected the rights of conscience.

Trifling, however, as the cause of the schisms at Rome might be, the effect was lamentably serious; for the Christians there, not satisfied with dissent-

ing from each other in the profession of opinions, proceeded on both sides to the exercise of harsh judgments; and if they had possessed power would probably have anticipated the proceedings of their posterity, of the same church, who *made themselves drunk with the blood of the saints*. If, therefore, the apostle had considered himself empowered in any case to claim the lordship over conscience, he would have been justified in preferring the claim in this: his not doing so, his doing the contrary, his renouncing, both for himself and every one else, authority to regulate the faith of another, is as decisive a proof as could be adduced of his admission of the inviolable right of the human mind to its own religious determinations.

There is, in fact, nothing trifling that is made matter of religion; the moment that a notion or an observance is taken into the jurisdiction of religion, it acquires importance from the authority by which it is enforced and from its inseparable connection with other things of infinite moment: it is not the nature of the point in which conscience is concerned, but its being a point of conscience that makes a religious persuasion important. Either, therefore, conscience is by right free on all points or none: the apostle has determined, by asserting

its liberty in one particular case, that it is free in all.

Arguing this subject differently, men have, I know, come to a different conclusion; and have maintained that in matters of no moment, ceremonies, for instance, no individual can plead conscience against the authority of a church or of the state. Let it be observed, however, that the argument is obviously vicious which leads Christians to a different conclusion from that of the scriptures; and the conclusion in this instance is manifestly absurd, for who shall decide what opinions are of moment and what not? He that could determine this, could determine equally the previous question, What is truth? In a word, he would be infallible. But, as was before remarked, there is no unimportant point within the whole range of conscience. You may require only that a Christian should kneel at the sacrament; but he may be convinced (it matters not whether by good reasons or bad,) that to comply would be the acknowledgment of an usurping power in the church; and with his persuasion, compliance would be an act of treachery to the one only Lord of Christians; and your forcing him upon it would be as much compelling him to sin (i. e. to a deed which he considers wrong,) as if you forced him to throw incense upon the altar of



an idol. Give up conscience, besides, to a church or a magistrate in what are called unimportant points, and you virtually give it up altogether; for by him that wishes to gain a particular end, a point will be represented as of the greatest moment or, of none, just as may suit his purpose. The proper reasoning is, I conceive, this: in points of importance conscience is not to be forced, because they are points of importance, and every individual is more deeply concerned to be right than any one else can be for him; in points of no importance conscience is not to be forced, because they are points of no importance, and it would be ridiculous to risque the compulsion of a Christian to the violation of his conscience, for a purpose that is confessed to be little worth.

It is one of the most pleasing features in the history of the establishment of Christianity, that our Lord and his apostles never employed external force in the promotion of their doctrine, but contented themselves with laying their evidences before the world, and leaving men to judge of them for themselves. Within the church *every man* was to *be fully persuaded in his own mind*, and God alone was declared the *Judge of them that were without*. Was this an essential part of their plan? or was it merely a necessary conformity to the weakness of

their condition? That it was the former and not the latter is evident from a variety of considerations, which at the same time that they do honour to the founders of our faith, suggest an important duty to all that wish to be Christians in reality and not in name alone.

1st. The Christian religion cannot be promoted by external force, for it consists only in the belief of certain facts, the reception of some truths growing out of them, and the performance of some consequent acts of morality. Our Lord had declared that *the kingdom of God was within men*, before he witnessed that *good confession before Pontius Pilate*, that *his kingdom was not of this world*, framed and upheld by the rules of human policy. Mere bodily service may be constrained by superior power, but bodily service forms no part of our religion, which consists in rectitude of mind and purity of heart, producing, as their natural fruit, all the pious, social and personal duties, which no earthly power can compel. A form of words, containing a creed or articles of faith, may be extorted even from unwilling lips; but Christianity has no formal, authorized creed; nay, a man may profess to believe every iota of it and yet want every essential of the christian character. The only effect of the interference of the secular

power in the concerns of religion, is to make men dishonest or to punish their honesty; to enforce hypocrisy, an odious vice, by violence and cruelty, scarcely less odious.

2ndly. The founders of our faith have laid down principles with which the use of force in matters of religion can never be reconciled. Our Lord himself rebuked the disciples sharply, for suggesting to him that he might call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans who refused them hospitality. *Ye know not*, said he, *what manner of spirit ye are of: the son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* He forbade the use of the sword in his cause, predicting and threatening that *he that used the sword should perish by it.* And he set no prospect before his disciples but that of suffering for his sake, and enforced upon them the virtues chiefly of patience, forbearance, fortitude and perseverance.

The apostles commenced their public ministry at Jerusalem with declaring, in the face of persecution, that *God was to be obeyed rather than man*; which was, in fact, an assertion of the supremacy of conscience, for conscience is the only judge of religious obedience; and had the apostles acquired worldly power and applied it to the coercion of men's minds, the plea would have been as good



*against* them as it had been *for* them. Wisely and magnanimously did they cut off from themselves all the roads to spiritual tyranny, boasting that they were not lords over God's heritage, but helpers of their brethren's joy, and asserting the right of every man to make up his own mind in religion and to avow his honest convictions.

3rdly. Although our Lord and the apostles predicted the spread and continuance of Christianity, they let fall no direction for taking religion under the patronage of the state; but, on the contrary, foreshewed, and not darkly, that by the assumption of unwarranted powers in the church, truth would be debased and righteousness be well nigh exploded. Now had it been within the original design of our faith that it should have been incorporated with the kingdoms of this world, it is inconceivable that this should not have been clearly stated by its founders, and that they should not have given rules for the formation of such an union, and for the prevention of the abuses to which it is liable.

Thus the silence, equally with the voice, of the Christian lawgiver and his associates, forbids the intrusion of worldly authority into the sanctuary of conscience, which is *a temple holy unto the Lord*,

and is defiled by statutes and decrees of civil ordination.

But it is contended, that the magistrate's duty to take care of the happiness and morals of a people, includes the suppression of error and the encouragement of truth. If he were capable of this, it would unquestionably be a part of his duty ; but he is, as to religion, only a man among men, equally liable, with others, to prejudice and error, and therefore his opinions have no better chance of being right than any other man's. Allow him to establish his own opinions and to put down others, and you set up the conscience of an individual against the consciences of a community : you pronounce all men to be in ignorance and mistake, except one whom accident has placed in a higher station than his fellows, and to him you attribute infallibility.

It is the same to the argument, whether authority over faith is assumed by an individual, or a corporation of individuals, whether a synod, a council or a parliament. These are but a collection of individual men, every one of whom is beset with all the infirmities of mind that attach to any other man ; together, they may form a large aggregate of ignorance, prejudice and error, but can never make an infallible mind.

Even if a whole community could assemble with a perfect unanimity in points of faith, they could not by their association establish a reasonable, permanent authority over their own minds : they may declare their belief for the present moment, but if they pledge themselves for futurity they virtually resolve not to admit any further light into their bosoms, even though revealed by heaven, and to stifle any new convictions which more extended inquiry and better knowledge may produce. Yet if this were absurd and presumptuous, how much more so must it be for any community, at a given period, to fix every particular of the faith, not of themselves merely for the remainder of their lives, but of their posterity, also, throughout all generations !

In truth, the highest human authority is infinitely less than that of God, which religion introduces into the mind, and will therefore never weigh with an honest man, except so far as the less sanction is included in the greater. Civil and political laws will not make one man religious, for they cannot make a man pure and humble and benevolent, which are the attributes of real religion ; he that is religious with them would have been so without them ; and they may possibly and do frequently harrass a man in his religion, and the more honest and religious



he is, the more likely is he to be harrassed by them, for thinking and acting, under the impulse of conscience, in a different manner from that which they prescribe.

As then Christianity has not given the state the empire over conscience, so neither can it have received this dominion from any other source. It belongs to God alone, and he has delegated it to none but *the man whom he has ordained*, to whom a name has been given, that he should be *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*.

Still it may be asked, whether it be not within the province of the civil power to repress immorality ; and if so, whether it be not allowable to put down doctrines of an immoral or mischievous tendency ? It is, unquestionably, not only the right, but the duty of the magistrate *to be a terror to evil doers, not bearing the sword in vain*, and wherever he finds overt immorality, which threatens the public peace or welfare, to interpose his authority ; but in the present imperfect state of society, there is much misconduct that must be referred to the righteous judgment of God, much licentiousness growing up along with liberty, which it is necessary, for the sake of the public welfare, to tolerate, *lest with the tares the wheat also be rooted up*. Pride and envy are pernicious sentiments of the

human heart, but the attempt to eradicate them by force would lead to the establishment of an inquisitorial tribunal, which would introduce greater evils than it would remove. Intemperance is a hurtful, and often a fatal vice; but it is better that it should in some cases be connived at, than that the sacred privacy of families should be violated, and that domestics should be bribed to be spies. The greater error, in short, of the civil power is that of interfering too much with the actions of individuals; and in cases of plain morality it is very far from clear that human laws ought always to be applied: much less can it be granted at once, that the supposed immoral tendency of a doctrine justifies its forcible suppression. There is no system of religion which professedly sanctions vice; there is none which does not, in one way or other, magnify virtue. All religions, in fact, are but different means of compassing the same end, happiness as the reward or consequence of goodness: and the objections that the professors of them make to each other's systems, lie against their tendency as the criterion of their truth. Hence, whilst all systems, probably, are promoting, though in different degrees, the common weal, all are in turn reproached with tending to practical evil. This is of use, by exciting investigation and emulation, whilst the

rival religionists stand on equal ground, and are armed only with reason and eloquence; but should the legislator or the magistrate interpose with the secular arm, and uphold his own predilections with the strength of the state, the case is altered, and what was before only a skilful turn of argument or a happy rhetorical artifice, is now converted into a ground of policy and becomes the foundation of violence and outrage. The opinions that the legislator or magistrate dislikes he will believe to be immoral, and under that view will proceed, without compunction, to persecute their professors: so that this is but another way of making civil power arbitrary, and declaring it to have a rightful lordship over religion. The moral tendencies of a creed are so subtle and secret, that it requires a keener eye and a more comprehensive view than man's to detect them fully; and to give any human being the right to act upon them, as if they were overt acts of mischief, is to invest him with the attribute of omniscience and to deliver up to him the interests of religion to be disposed of at his pleasure.

The professors of a particular creed may, in some particular conjuncture, constitute a faction hostile to the state. Then, it may be said, Is not their religion justly punishable? If their religion can be



proved to be inimical to their country, which however would be hard to prove of any religion, let it be execrated ; but it will perhaps be time enough to punish its advocates when they actually disturb the public peace, or conspire against the public safety. Prospective and precautionary acts of power comprize some of the greatest outrages and cruelties that are to be found on the page of history ; and, apart from all religious considerations, the permission to the state to use the rod over sects, by way of speculation, would be a concession speedily fatal to liberty and even to orderly government.

The public peace is pleaded against all our arguments for private conscience, and it is said that the liberty for which we contend will fill a country with a multitude of hostile and conflicting sects. It is granted that the liberty of thinking will produce thinking, that the possession will lead to the exercise of religious freedom ; but it is denied that this will be any injury to society. Mischief is produced by religious sects only when the state, instead of being a wise and just parent, indulges partialities and antipathies ; endowing one with wealth and power, barely tolerating a second and suppressing a third. Then, indeed, worldly considerations are too apt to mix with religious ; the favour of the state is a prize for which

rival parties contend, and unhallowed passions are called up in the contention; the party in possession of riches and honours strives to keep the others down, lest its own good fortune should be endangered; and the others struggle to rise above their present humiliating level, lest their contented weakness should invite further oppression. All the evil in this case is plainly attributable, not to a variety of sects, but to the inequitable, injudicious partiality of the civil power, which converts religious differences into political dissensions, and turning churches into rivals for power, arms their innocent prejudices and predilections with worldly animosities. Left to themselves, contrary opinions on religion would be no more an evil than contrary opinions on philosophy or grammar or medicine or law; nay, different sects, under a wise government, would be a manifest good, as they would watch over each other, and their very number would be a pledge to the state that no one could rise to formidable importance.

Long enough has the civil power tried the vain expedient of preserving peace and security by allying itself with particular ecclesiastical factions; the consequence, through a series of ages, has been discontent, turbulence, insurrection, war. Let the experiment be at length made, of protecting all religions and discountenancing none; let the ma-

gistrate, disdaining to be a partizan, become a common friend; let faith be referred to a higher tribunal than any on earth, to every man's conscience before God; in short, let Christianity be again put on the footing on which it was placed by our Lord and the apostles, let it be wholly distinct from this world's policy, neither dictating to thrones nor trampled under foot of power—and the effect would in all probability be as desirable as it would certainly be novel: charity would be planted where now the root of bitterness is springing up, and in the place of envyings, jealousies, disorders and apprehensions, would appear good-will, confidence, quiet and security.

He that honestly contends for the right of the civil power to use its authority for the establishment of truth, should consider that if the plea be good, it is good for all times and all places. The state now patronizes *his* creed, and therefore he maintains that its patronage is useful; but the state may change hands, and opinions directly opposite to his own may be approved by *the powers that be*: would he then be content that his own creed should be trodden under the hoof of tyranny, and that the creed that he most dislikes should be set on high and clothed with pomp? If he would not, his plea for the alliance between church and state falls to the ground.



But further, if it be right to impose the belief of governors upon the people, in one country, it is right in all; because no one set of governors can have greater powers from God, or better natural means of coming at truth, than another, and thus you will have, as the effect of a principle, Calvinism set up as the state idol of one country, a mixture of Calvinism, Arminianism and Popery that of a second, a modified Popery that of a third, Popery in all its rigour that of a fourth, and (to stop here) Mahometanism that of a fifth. All these establishments may be vindicated or none can; some of the professors of all religions are at the same time justly suffering for conscience' sake, or none suffer but in violation of justice.\*

There are infinite chances against any one civil establishment enshrining all truth and no error; but if any portion of error be built up in its frame and constitution, the error is likely to be perpetual; and Christians living under such establishment, and perceiving the error which it contains are reduced to this dilemma, either to worship with unsatisfied consciences, or to purchase peace of mind at the expence of worldly interests. And is this a condition into which an enlightened policy would force any honest man?

\* "Any law against conscience is alike in force against any conscience." Milton. *Of Civ. Pow. in Ecc. Caus.* Works. Fo. li. 741.

In effect, every plea for the right of the state to controul religion, is a sentence of condemnation against Christianity, which arose in opposition to the civil power, and prospered in the midst of persecution. "Herod and Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel," were just as reasonable and equitable in their treatment of Jesus and his apostles, as later governors and communities in their hard dealings towards any of Christ's followers. It is vain to plead that our Lord and his disciples brought a revelation from God, for their persecutors did not believe in their divine embassy; and the truth which the humblest Christian learns or thinks he learns from his Bible, is as imperative upon his mind and conduct as the most solemn revelation could have been to the highest prophet. If, therefore, we condemn the persecutors of the founders of our faith, we must with equal decisiveness pronounce them who have made war with the consciences of any Christian people to have been also fighting against God.

No one, it may be justly alleged, would now vindicate the use of fire and faggot in the service of the state religion. It is well to have advanced so far, and thanks to a good Providence for this improvement in the public mind! But persecution is not to be considered defunct because it is weakened. The spirit of persecution is this—to wish to inflict

harm, or to take away good, on account of opinions. If no harm be inflicted, yet if good be taken away or denied, there is real, palpable persecution. A broader or a narrower, a deeper or a more superficial brand of disgrace may be impressed upon conscience; but the least opprobrium fastened on a faithful adherence to principle, is a result of the same evil mind that in other times, and under other circumstances, lighted up fires for martyrs. Virtue makes a man jealous of his reputation; when, therefore, the state puts a label on his faith, intimating that he is unworthy of trust, *it touches the apple of his eye*, it injures him in the most vital part; and, in the soreness of his feelings, shall he be still told that the stigma that he bears about is not persecution? Call it by what name you will, the spirit which suggests to one man the design of making another man's condition worse for his conscience is an evil spirit; this evil spirit Christianity was sent forth by the God of benevolent might to subdue; already we have seen Satan falling from Heaven like lightning, vengeful but rapid in his descent, and now Truth and Charity, revived and strengthened by public opinion, are preparing to bind the fiend in chains of darkness. Would you, it may be further asked, permit every man to obtrude his religious notions on the

men and artificers are not to have religious feelings



world? Let our apostle answer, *Ye may all prophesy one by one*; in other words, every man that understands Christianity, or that fancies he understands it, which is the same thing, may teach it. This license, it may be replied, was given only to a Christian church. True; but it was given to a Christian church, that at Corinth, which the most cursory perusal of the 2d Epistle addressed to it will shew to have contained as weak and disorderly members as can be found in any community whatever. In fact, the liberty of teaching must be, in reason, conceded to all, if to any, for none can now pretend, without hypocrisy, to an express divine commission. Every Christian stands upon precisely the same ground; bound to do all the good he can, and authorised to attempt any good that he deems practicable. Under this license, ignorant and even immoral men may, it is confessed, aspire to be religious instructors; but what laws and restrictions have ever been, or can be devised, to make Christian teachers wise and virtuous? The only security for the talents and character of this order of men is that it shall be their interest to be well-informed and upright, and this they will for the most part be when they stand or fall, not by family alliances or political patronage, but by the suffrages of their brethren. It may be

safely presumed that no Christian people would long listen to a minister notoriously immoral ; and as to learning and talents, every company of auditors must and will judge for themselves of the necessity of these qualifications in their pastors : in some cases, it may be found that plain good sense and scriptural knowledge are the only necessary means of ministerial usefulness. But if Christian societies prefer ignorant men to their highest offices, none suffer but themselves ; no one is compelled to enter into their communion, no one is constrained to stay in it ; the injury is no more to the public than if a family should keep hours or use viands injurious to health. The prevailing prejudice on this head has arisen from the misconception that lay teachers have been favoured with immunities from the state. To these they have and they make no claim ; all they ask is, and their request is enforced by the gospel, to be allowed to tell to their fellow Christians what God has done for their souls, and to employ their hours of leisure in teaching the young, instructing persons less informed than themselves, and promoting amongst their neighbours a serious sense of religion. What is intended by opposition to so modest, so reasonable, so pious a demand ? Is it meant that husbandmen and artificers are not to have religious feelings

and opinions? But what is the liberty of thinking, without the liberty of divulging thought? Human power, screwed to the most tyrannical pitch, cannot stifle the mind; the free communication of opinions is the only liberty which man can allow to man, and to grant this to the higher classes of society and to deny it to the lower, would be an insolent oppression, unchristian, nay, inhuman.

It may be once more urged, that the unbridled liberty of conscience and freedom of speech in matters of religion, for which we have contended, would open the door to scepticism and infidelity, and allow them to range unmolested throughout the land. I admit the consequence; and speaking only my own individual sentiment, and not at all committing this congregation or the society which it represents to the principle, I will frankly avow that it was one object of my choosing this subject, to take an occasion, as a Christian minister, of publicly declaring my persuasion that an unbeliever is as much entitled by natural right, and also on Christian principles, to attack Christianity as I am to defend it. I stand up for no party privileges, no exclusive rights; I plead for no advantages that I would not share in common with Christians of all denominations, and with objectors to Christianity. The unbeliever may revile religion indecently, and



may mingle scurrility with his arguments. Be it so; but let it be remembered that the pious Christian would be ready to deem all attacks on his religion objectionable and offensive in the manner as well as the matter. The more indecorous the assault upon our faith, the less argument there is in it, the less certainly there is of danger to Christian minds, which will be shocked by impious scoffs, and will not abandon the faith of their education without a struggle. In this, the worst case that can be put, I see no reason for departing from the Christian rule of the liberty of private judgment. Most gladly and devoutly do I acknowledge my persuasion, after no slight examination, of the authenticity of the New Testament, and of the divine origin of the gospel; and my faith as a Christian is dearer to me than any other conviction of my mind: but I am not more fully satisfied of the truth of our religion than I am of its allowing and requiring every man to whom it comes to look into it for himself, to judge impartially and to declare his honest judgment.

If, indeed, men be not free to reject Christianity, should the evidences on its behalf not be conclusive on their minds, they are not at liberty to inquire into its pretensions; for there can be no fair trial where judgment is pronounced beforehand; and to

recommend investigation, but to determine by statute how it shall end, is a mockery of the understanding and a preposterous tyranny.

The evidence for Christianity is of a moral not a sensible kind, and will be differently estimated by inquirers, according to their degree of information and their habits of reasoning. An injury is done to it when the proofs in its favour are represented as absolute demonstration. It is the plan of the Divine Wisdom that whilst there should be such evidence for it as to convince patient inquirers, there should not be so much as to compel assent suddenly and irresistibly, and to supersede the use of the thinking powers. We are not born Christians, or made such by a bodily ceremony; we arrive at the Christian mind and character by slow degrees; but inquirers are not, properly speaking, believers, and if the expression of religious doubts, or the calling for evidence and argument in behalf of religion, be esteemed a civil offence, our minds may be stopped in their progress by human laws, the injustice and absurdity of which may create a mistaken prejudice against Christianity itself. The strongest argument for the gospel is the spirit of its morality; and the peculiarity and glory of this is its assertion of unlimited charity, and its provision for the unrestrained exercise of the rights of private judgment.

The objection to the liberty of conscience to unbelievers amounts to nothing if it do not go the length of punishing them for their opinions; but what Christian is prepared to maintain from the New Testament that opinions are punishable? He will there find that the followers of Jesus are to be ready to suffer for their own faith, but not authorized to injure others for their faith or their want of faith. Judgment on the heart and conscience is vindicated by our Lord to Almighty God, as his sole prerogative; nor can any course of conduct be more opposite to the example and command of the holy Jesus than to treat objectors, not with benevolent pity, but with scorn, and to follow revilers, not with blessings, but with curses and with heavy judicial penalties.

The honour of religion is here pleaded in vain; for it is honoured only when its precepts are obeyed and its benevolent design is carried forward. Never did it appear with so much glory as in the first three centuries of its history, when its disciples were under persecution; never was it so much disgraced as in the middle ages, when churchmen wielded the sword and became themselves persecutors. To Mahometanism let us leave the opprobrium of prospering by external force; for Christianity let us claim the high merit, the



boast of its ancient, and of all its enlightened advocates, of making its way by dint of argument. We cannot, let us be assured, make Christians by civil decree, or convert unbelievers by fines and prisons and pillories; but we may and certainly shall by these means give a weak and bad cause the strength of public sympathy, and raise infidelity to an eminence in the general opinion, by placing it on the vantage ground of suffering.

Are we Christians with so little reason that we fear a scrutiny into the pretensions of our religion? Is our faith so ill-founded that it cannot stand an assault? Do we want the civil power to prop our falling profession? My brethren, this reliance upon an arm of flesh bespeaks our distrust of the arm of the Lord. Why do we so much discredit truth as to fear that it cannot stand alone? Let us recur to better and nobler sentiments. Persuaded of the strength as well as beauty of the Christian temple, let us triumph in it, inviting examination and not hindering opposition. The fabric has stood for ages, the pride and glory of mankind, and will still stand impregnable to its enemies. It is constructed by a divine hand of imperishable matter. The mistaken ingenuity and depraved taste of mankind had covered it with unsuitable ornaments, and surrounded it with frail and needless

fences ; these, the fiery darts of the adversary, which wheresoever lighted were pointed in their course by Providence, have consumed, or are consuming. Nothing will presently remain but the building of God; but that will remain for ever entire ; and, all external compulsion being withdrawn, into it shall flow all nations and tongues, to experience the goodness, and to celebrate the praise, of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

---

In concluding, it may be expected that I should apply the principle of this discourse to the occasion and object of the present assembly ; and it may become me to explain why I have chosen a topic involving none of the doctrinal peculiarities of this association of Christians. May I then honestly say that on looking over the discourses which my much-respected precursors in this annual service have given to the world, I found all the great principles of Unitarianism so ably and fully set forth, that I could not have selected for defence any points of our faith without reminding you, to the disadvantage of the present address, of confessors and advocates for truth, who, from their years, their habits of friendship with you, and their serviceableness to our common cause, have pleaded before you with greater success than

I could hope to attain.\* By their valuable labours, our doctrines have been made known, with the highest credit to us, throughout the circle embraced by this society; so that there appeared to me to be an opening, which might be occupied by a stranger without presumption, for asserting the great Protestant principle of religious liberty,—the principle, indeed, on which this society is built, and which has been always maintained with peculiar care by our denomination. We entertain no sectarian design; we wish to form no exclusive party; our object is accomplished if we lead men to think for themselves, and therefore we begin our labours with maintaining their right to free inquiry, assured that if we can establish the right, we shall secure the performance of the duty. Religious liberty, the liberty of the mind and conscience, at all times an interesting, heart-cheering subject, is particularly enforced upon us by the circumstances of our age and country; no one can now be indifferent to it, involving, as it does, the well-being and the very existence of the empire: ignorance and apathy on this point would not only be reproachful to us as professors of Christianity, but would render us wholly unfit for the performance of our part of social service, at a period when our

\* Note B.



country and the world call for the heart and voice of every one of us in favour of charity and union.

It is true that we associate for the purpose of propagating doctrines not universally known, not popular, not in agreement with the interests of a few or the prejudices of the many ; but our object is not at variance, but is congenial with the principle, which we have attempted to lay down, of the right and duty of every man to be fully persuaded as to religious matters in his own mind. We have, we desire no authority or power but that of argument and persuasion drawn from the New Testament. We appeal calmly and coolly, with the scriptures in our hands, to every one's conscience before God. We expect not, nor wish for sudden assent to our arguments, or implicit faith in our statements. We court inquiry, we challenge objection. We blame no one for blaming us. We hold it to belong to our fellow-christians to oppose us as far as they think us wrong, and thank them for endeavouring to set us right. We know that we are not infallible, and we dare not believe that we profess all truth and no error. In our humble opinion, indeed, we have the mind of Christ, and under that persuasion we are compelled by our reverence and duty to our ascended Lord to do our utmost to fill up the measure of his work, that we

may not be ashamed before him at his coming ; but we willingly acknowledge that charity is the highest truth, and therefore we fear to judge and censure our fellow-servants, however they may differ from us in faith and worship. We say only, Let God be true; though all men, and ourselves amongst the rest, should be found false witnesses ; let no opinions be received without examination ; let no inquirer be checked ; let no conscience be forced ; let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Our principles are few, but they appear to us to be supremely important :—they are, as they come to our minds under sanction of nature and divine revelation, that God is One, One Being, One Mind, One Person ; that he is the Father of all, an equal, a loving and a most merciful father ; that his designs are eternally and universally benevolent ; and that creation, providence and redemption are only different modes of exercising his love and diffusing his goodness : that Jesus Christ is the chosen, the superlatively endowed, the supremely honoured messenger of God, anointed above his brethren because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity—highly exalted, with a name above every name, that in his name every knee should bow to the glory of God the Father, because he was obe-

dient to death, even the death of the cross ; that he spake as never man spake, with superior wisdom and higher authority ; that he was endowed with a divine power, for God was with him always as he went about doing good ; that he alone, of all that have submitted to death, has been raised from the grave, after the power of an endless life, the only begotten from the dead, and thus declared to be the best beloved son of God ; and that he has been taken up into heaven for us, to carry on, in ways unknown to us, and to consummate his glorious mission ; that, in apostolic language, this man is for ever set down at the right hand of the throne of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool, that he gave himself a ransom for all men to be testified in due time, that as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive ; and that in him, ultimately, according to antient prophecy, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Such are our leading principles, which we cannot deem unimportant, and to the success of which we cannot be indifferent ; for they seem to us to form the only rational basis of faith in divine revelation, to be powerfully constraining to all righteousness, and, in short, to be abundant in comfort to man and glory to God.



If we err in holding them, we cannot plead contented ignorance, or the prejudices of education, or the secret bias of temporal interest, in palliation of our error. With the mass of our fellow-Christians, we once held other and widely different doctrines, (I speak my own experience, and that, I know, of many of my brethren,) which we surrendered up reluctantly, on conviction of their being unscriptural, with the loss of earliest religious friendships and subject to various misrepresentations and reproaches; so that we venture to say, with the ever-memorable Mr. John Hales, that our error, if it be one, has cost us more than most people's truth, and that if we go wrong, it is our misfortune rather than our fault.\*

Amidst all human fallibility, and under the feeling of popular animosities and harsh judgments, (and we cannot but feel them deeply,) there is this at least to console and to assure us, that our sentiments compel us to think candidly of, and to entertain sentiments of benevolence for all our fellow-men and all our Christian brethren, even our opposers and revilers. Whatever license of bigotry and intolerance others may obtain from their principles, we cannot be uncharitable without self-condemna-

\* Note C.

tion. While, therefore, we live, in any good degree, under the influence of our faith, we have the witness within ourselves that we are not altogether unworthy followers of the Prince of Peace, or entirely unprofitable servants of the God of Love.

Go forward boldly, then, my Christian brethren, in the good work which you have undertaken: temporal reward you wish not for; but you will have the satisfaction of your own minds in the consciousness of doing your duty; and Providence is manifestly succeeding your efforts, and thus giving you an earnest of the future prevalence of truth, and of the final joy of all the workers together with God in raising upon Christian foundations the glorious fabrick of social happiness.

May that God, whom under various forms and by different methods we all serve, replenish us with the spirit of his grace! May the mind of the meek and merciful Jesus inhabit more visibly in all churches of his disciples! May there be peace on earth and good-will amongst men! May there be no more envying or vexing, hurting or destroying for conscience' sake! May we all, in our respective stations and with our several talents and under our diversified professions, follow whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever

things are lovely and of good report, that we may thus give glory to the Highest, with one mind and one mouth worshipping God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**END.**



## APPENDIX.

---

### Note A.

In asserting the right of unbelievers to avow and defend their opinions, the author does not, happily, stand alone amongst Christians.

Dr. Lardner prefaced his "Vindication of Three of our Saviour's Miracles, in answer to the objections of Mr. Woolston," by a declaration of his wish that that eccentric writer might be brought to conviction and profession of the truth "by solid reasons and arguments, without pains or penalties.\*"

This free sentiment seems to have alarmed Dr. Waddington, at that time Bishop of Chichester, who addressed a letter of amicable remonstrance to Dr. Lardner. "To the bishop our author sent an answer, which produced a second letter from his lordship, and a reply in return. These four letters, which were written with mutual civility and re-

\* Vindication, &c. Works, Vol. xi. p. 2.

spect, are given in the Appendix" (to the Life of Lardner by Dr. Kippis\*); "and it will now be little doubted, on which side lay the advantage of the argument."†

The bishop professes to be willing that mere infidelity should pass with impunity, but urges that a scurrilous, blasphemous way of defending it should be punished by the civil magistrate: to this Dr. Lardner answers most justly that it is "a consequence of permitting men to write against Christianity, that we must also shew indulgence toward the manner.‡"

Another of Mr. Woolston's antagonists protested against the employment of fine and imprisonment in silencing him; I allude to the melancholy and interesting Simon Browne, who prefixed to "A Fit Rebuke to a Ludicrous Infidel: in some Remarks on Mr. Woolston's Fifth Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour," a "Preface concerning the prosecution of such writers by the civil powers," which Mr. afterwards Dr. W. Harris, the editor of the pamphlet, truly describes as "a vigorous plea for liberty, writ with a great deal of evidence."

"Nor is this," says Mr. Browne,|| speaking of

\* Prefixed to Works, Vol. I. Life, &c. p. cxv. et seq.

† Ibid. Life, p. xviii.

‡ Ib. p. cxviii.

|| Pref. p. ii.

of the use of force against infidelity, "for the honour of Christianity itself. Can it not stand against fair argument, that recourse must be had to the civil power for its defence? It is treachery to it, to do any thing that fairly carries such an intimation. If it can, let its professors and ministers defend it and shew the weakness of what is objected against it, and in this manly way convince and silence gainsayers; not padlock their mouths by making it penal to gainsay it at all. If they take such a method to support it, both enemies and indifferents will be ready to suspect, they distrust either their religion or themselves; that *that* is not defensible, at least, that *they* can not defend it. Or else, that they are content their religion should shift for itself, if they, by power, may secure the worldly emoluments annexed to it. And this is the way to disgrace their religion, and bring themselves into disesteem."

"I could wish, therefore,"\* he concludes, "Mr. W. had never been prosecuted for his discourses; or that he might now be graciously pardoned, and that even my lords the bishops, if they were concerned, as he says, in his prosecution, would be petitioners first, and put up all the indignities offered themselves, for the honour of Christianity. Let him go on in his own way. If he can demonstrate

\* Pref. p. xv.



the falsehood of Christianity, Christians must get a better, or make the best of the religion of nature. If he cannot, as Christians must believe, let him, if such be his list, use his endeavours: and if, where his reasons fail, he will misrepresent, calumniate and crack a jest, this may make some mirth for fools, but cannot hurt Christianity, nor impress any one soul to its disadvantage, who is ever likely to be a real Christian, or a credit to the religion of Jesus."

The same liberal sentiment is expressed by Dr. Samuel Chandler, in his "Vindication of the Christian Religion," and with the propriety and force which distinguish all the writings of that masterly author, who was an ornament not only to the Protestant Dissenters, but also to the Christian church at large.

"It is not surprising," he says,\* "that men who take their religion upon trust, should be in pain for it, when they find it attacked, or that they should call aloud to the magistrate, because they know not how otherwise to answer. But that men of learning and great abilities, whose proper office it is to defend Christianity, by giving the reasons for their faith, and who seem to have both ability and leisure thus to stand up in the behalf of it, should make their appeal to the civil power, and become

\* Pref. p. xii. *et seq.*

humble suitors to the magistrate, to controul the spirit of infidelity, is strangely surprising. It looks as if they suspected the strength of Christianity; otherwise, one would think they would not invite such strange and foreign aids to their assistance, when they could have more friendly ones nearer at home, that would much more effectually support and protect it; or at least, as though they had some other interest to maintain, than the common cause of Christianity, though at the same time they would be willingly thought to have nothing else in view, but the service and honour of it. If the scheme of our modern Deists be founded in truth, I cannot help wishing it all good success; and it would be a crime in the civil magistrate, by any methods of violence, to prevent the progress of it. But if, as I believe, Christianity is the cause of God, it will prevail by its own native excellence, and of consequence needs not the assistance of the civil power. It once triumphed in its amazing success, when the powers of this world were bent upon its extirpation; and if they would but be content to believe for themselves only, and stand neuter between the contending parties, only preserving them from offering violence to one another, I should not be afraid of the most formidable objections that any of its adversaries can bring against the

Christian revelation. Yea, on the contrary, I am persuaded, that nothing could be of more service to Christianity than to suffer and even invite the enemies of it to speak out their difficulties with freedom; for by being thus fairly proposed, they might be impartially considered and solidly answered; whereby those who believe already would be more confirmed in the faith they have received, and others who are now unbelievers, might be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus; things indefensible would be given up; the spirit of charity would grow more warm and diffusive; men would become Christians, not merely through education and custom, but upon solid reasons and firm conviction, and of consequence the influence of Christianity would probably be much more strong and effectual upon the consciences and lives of its professors."

Dr. Sykes, also, with his accustomed liberality, maintained that unbelievers "should be by no means molested, or any ways injured on account of their bringing objections against the religion which we profess.\*"

Several other eminent christian writers might be adduced as advocates for liberty of conscience to un-

\* Essay on the Truth of the Christian Religion. Pref. p. viii. Second edition.



believers ; but the author will content himself with two brief extracts from the works of two of the most distinguished divines of the Church of Scotland : he brings forward these authorities, not because he is doubtful of the goodness of the principle which he has laid down, but because he is eager to recommend it by all fair means to his Christian brethren, and to convince unbelievers (if any such should look into these pages,) that it is not a new or rare persuasion that the religion of Jesus can stand in its own proper strength.

“ Let unbelievers write,” says Dr. Campbell,\* “ let them argue, and when arguments fail, even let them cavil against religion, as much as they please : I should be heartily sorry, that ever in this island, the asylum of liberty, where the spirit of Christianity is better understood (however defective the inhabitants are in the observance of its precepts) than in any other part of the Christian world ; I should, I say, be sorry, that in this island, so great a disservice were done to religion, as to check its adversaries, in any other way, than by returning a candid answer to their objections. I must at the same time acknowledge, that I am both ashamed and grieved, when I observe any friends

\* Dissert. on Miracles, published with Sermons and Tracts in 2 vols. 8vo. Vol. i. p. 301. Third edition. Edinburgh. 1797.

of religion, betray so great a diffidence in the goodness of their cause (for to this diffidence alone it can be imputed) as to shew an inclination for recurring to more forcible methods."

"That the accession of evidence which Christianity acquires by standing the test of inquiry," (concludes Dr. Gerard, at the close of an able argument on the subject, with which his "Dissertations" end,\*) may appear with the greatest advantage, it is necessary that the objections against it be proposed with as great security as the arguments for it; without this, the trial which it sustains is not absolutely fair; and till the opposite reasons be carefully balanced, there is room left for a suspicion, that it has sustained a trial, not by the force of its truth alone, but partly also by the protection of human power. It is not every degree of restraint that will justify this suspicion; but it is pity that by any degree of restraint, a pretence was ever given for it. Let never infidels be discouraged from reasoning freely against the evidences of Christianity, as well as on other subjects; their strongest reasonings against it will do it the greatest service; they will be like heroes whose bravery renders the victory more difficult, but whose capti-

\* Dissertations on the Genius and the Evidences of Christianity. Diss. ii. § iv. pp. 497, *et seq.*

vity adds greatly to the splendour of the triumph. If they even betake themselves to cavils and misrepresentations, let these be only pointed out with calmness; they will in the end not only disgrace their authors, but also hurt the cause which they were intended to serve. Infidelity, allowed to do its utmost, tends ultimately to destroy itself, by making the truth of Christianity to appear the more evident and unquestionable. If then we really believe our religion to be of divine original, and be not under the power of a contracted and undiscerning spirit, concern for its success will concur with many other principles in leading us to wish most earnestly, that infidelity may never be opposed by any other weapons, but that of just reasoning. Gold is *refined* in the furnace; it is only the worthless dross that is *consumed*; let Christians never act as if they suspected their religion to be dross. Let penal laws be invariably appropriated to *crimes*, concerning which fallible men can judge with precision, which are the natural objects of human cognizance, which may be effectually restrained by punishment, and which are so immediately destructive to society, as to render punishment necessary for its preservation. Let never the interests of truth be obstructed by ill-judged or unlawful attempts to promote them."

---



## Note B.

The following is a List of all the Sermons preached before the Society which have been published.

| Year. | Preacher.         | Place.     | Subject.                                                        |
|-------|-------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1792. | J. Toulmin, A. M. | Crediton   | John xviii. 37. Character of Christ as a Witness to the Truth.* |
| 1793. | T. Kenrick,       | Taunton    | Matt. xiii. 33. Parable of the leaven in the Meal.†             |
| 1794. | T. Reynell,       | Exeter     | Titus ii. 10. Adorn the Doctrine.                               |
| 1795. | T. Broadhurst,    |            | Acts xvii. 29 Importance of Just Sentiments of God.             |
| 1796. | J. Kentish,       | Exeter     | 1. Tim v. 3 Moral Tendency of the Christian Doctrine.‡          |
| 1797. | J. Toulmin, D. D. | Tiverton   | 2 Cor. x. 7. Injustice of classing Unitarians with Deists.      |
| 1798. | J. Isaac,         | Cullompton | 2 Cor. i. 3, 4. Consolations of Pure Christianity.              |
| 1799. | J. Rowe,          | Warminster | Acts xi. 26. Disciples called Christians.                       |
| 1800. | T. Belsham,       | Bristol    | Philipp. iii. 8. Freedom of Inquiry.                            |

\* A second edition of this discourse was published a few years since.

† Republished in Mr. Kenrick's Discourses, 1805. Vol ii. p. 325.

‡ A second edition in 1798.

|                             |                   |                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1801. J. P. Estlin,         | Bridport          | Matt. x. 16. Union of Wisdom and Integrity.                                     |
| 1802. Th. Browne,           | Bath              | Deut. v. 27. Necessity of a new Version of Scripture.                           |
| 1803. J. David,             | Taunton           | Acts ii. 22. Wisdom and Benevolence in the Appointment of the Man Christ Jesus. |
| 1804. J. Davis,             | Moreton Hampstead | Luke vi. 36. Placability of God.                                                |
| 1805. J. H. Bransby,        | Gloucester        | 1 Pet. ii. 21. Example of Jesus the Example of a Man.                           |
| 1808. L. Carpenter, L L. D. | Bristol           | John xviii. 37. Errors respecting Unitarianism.                                 |
| 1809. E. Butcher,           | Bridgewater       | 2 Cor. x. 7. Unitarian Claims.                                                  |
| 1811. J. Kentish,           | Exeter            | 1 John, iv. 1, 2, 3. Simplicity of the Gospel.                                  |

---

#### Note C.

The passage of Mr. John Hales's referred to, is in "A Letter to Archbishop Laud, upon occasion of the Tract concerning Schism," and is as follows :

"If they be errors which I have here vented (as perchance they are), yet my will hath no part in them, and they are but the issues of unfortunate inquiry. Galen, that great physician, speaks thus

\* Method. Medendi, lib. 7. c. 1.

of himself :\* ' I know not how (says that worthy person) even from my youth up, in a wonderful manner, whether by divine inspiration, or by fury and possession, or however you may please to stile it, I have much contemned the opinion of the many ; but truth and knowledge, I have above measure affected : verily persuading myself, that a fairer, more divine fortune could never befall a man.' Some title, some claim I may justly lay to the words of this excellent person ; for the pursuit of truth hath been my only care, ever since I first understood the meaning of the word. For this, I have forsaken all hopes, all friends, all desires which might bias me, and hinder me from driving right at what I aimed. For this I have spent my money, my means, my youth, my age, and all I have ; that I might remove from myself that censure of Tertullian,—*Suo vitio quis quid ignorat ?* ' If with all this cost and pains, my purchase is but error, I may safely say, to err hath cost me more, than it has many to find the truth : and truth itself shall give me this testimony at last, that if I have missed her, it is not my fault, but my misfortune."

*Works of the Ever-Memorable Mr. John Hales of Eaton. Glasgow ed. in 3 Vols. 12mo. v. i. pp. 137. 138.*



# LIST OF THE MEMBERS

## SOCIETY OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND:

Those whose names are marked thus \* are Members for Life. Those whose names are printed in italics have become Members during the present year.

### A.

Mr. Edward Addicot, Exeter

Mr. Francis Allen, Bristol

Mr. Thomas Andrews, Bristol

\*Rev. Matthew Anstis, Bridport

Rev. Richard Awbrey, Gloucester

*Rev. Robert Aspland, Hackney*

### B.

Mr. William Basnett, Bath

\*Rev. Thomas Belsham, London

Mr. John Biss, Bristol

Rev. J. H. Bransby, Dudley  
 Mr. John Balston, Bridport  
 Mr. Edmund Batten, Yeovil  
 Mr. William Brown, Cullompton  
 \* Timothy Brown, Esq. London  
 Rev. Thomas Broadhurst, Bath  
 Robert Bruce, Esq. Bristol  
 Mr. Benjamin Buckler, Warminster  
 Mr. N. Peach Buckler, Exeter  
 Mr. William Bowring, Exeter  
 Rev. Edmund Butcher, Sidmouth  
 Mr. William Browne, Bridgewater  
 John Foster Barham, Esq. Exeter  
 Malachi Blake, M.D. Taunton  
 Mr. T. Baldwyn, Dursley  
 Mr. Richard Bayly, Plymouth  
 Mr. George Bayly, Plymouth  
 Mr. William Baynard, Plymouth  
 Mr. James Barton, Plymouth  
 Mr. J. H. Bailey, Plymouth  
 Mr. William Battiscombe, Bridport  
 Mr. Benjamin Bowring, Exeter  
 Mr. Daniel Brock, Wellington  
 Mr. John Bamfield, Honiton  
 Mr. James Bennett, Exeter

## C.

Rev. Dr. Carpenter, Exeter

Mrs. William Carpenter, Bromsgrove

Mr. Michael Castle, Bristol

Mr. Michael Castle, Jun., Bristol

*Mr. William Colfox, Bridport*

*Mr. William Carpenter, Honiton*

Richard Hall Clarke, Esq. Bridwell House, near  
Cullompton; TREASURER

Mr. Colfox, Bridport

Mr. Cummins, London

Mr. George Cudlipp, Tavistock

Mr. William Curtis, Plymouth

Mr. John Cross, Exeter

Mr. James Cross, Exeter

Mr. Isaac Cox, Exeter

Mr. William Cummins, Exeter

## D.

Rev. John Davis, Cullompton

Rev. David Davis, Neath, Glamorganshire

Mr. John Davey, Exeter

Rev. Henry Davies, Taunton

Rev. Thomas Davis, Lambrook

Rev. Job David, Swansea

Messrs. Davis and Benson, Plymouth



**Mr. John Gundry Downe, Bridport**

**Mr. William Drewe, Exeter**

**Mr. N. Downe, Bridport**

**Mr. Joseph Downe, Bridport**

**E.**

**Rev. Dr. Estlin, Bristol**

**Rev. John Evans, Bristol**

**Mr. John Evans, Printer, Bristol**

**Rev. John Evans, Oakhill**

**Rev. W. Evans, Tavistock**

**Mr. H. B. Evans, Bath**

**Mr. William Ellerby, London**

**Mrs. M. M. Eustace, Bridport**

**F**

**Mr. Fisher, Dorchester**

**Mr Thomas Fisher, Jun. Dorchester**

**Mr. William Fowler, Jun. Bridport**

**Rev. Samuel Fawcett, Yeovil**

**Mr. John Fletcher, Liverpool**

**Mr. Anthony Fletcher, Bristol**

**A Friend, by Rev. T. Belsham**

**A Friend, Totnes**

**G.**

**Mr. William Good, Bridport**

***Mr. Joseph Gundry, Bridport***

***Mr. Joseph Gundry, Jun. Bridport***

***Miss Glascodine, Bristol***

***Mr. James Grafton, Brierly-hill, near Stourbridge***

***Mr. Adam Gray, Plymouth***

***Mr. Samuel Gundry, Bridport***

***Mr. Richard Galpin, Bridport***

## H.

***Mr. Richard Hale, Frenchay***

***Mr. Edmund Halliday, Warminster***

***Mr. Edward Harley, Bristol***

***Mr. Samuel Heineken, Bristol***

***Mr. W. C. Hill, Bristol***

***Mrs. Hayes, Exeter***

***Mr. William Hall, Bristol***

***Rev. Thos. Howe, Bridport***

***Mr. John Hounsell, Bridport***

***Mr. Thomas Hounsell, Bridport***

***Mr. William Hounsell, Bridport***

***Mr. Joseph Hounsell, Bridport***

***Mr. Thomas Hinton, Warminster***

***Mr. Samuel Hobbs, Frenchay***

***Mr. Thomas Hodgetts, Bristol***

***Rev. William Jillard Hort, Bristol***

***Mr. Saunders Hornbrook, Tavistock***

Mr. George Houghton, Exeter  
 Rev. Henry Houson, Bridgewater  
 Mr. Huxham, Exeter  
 Rev. Joseph Hunter, Bath  
 Mr. J. P. Haddock, Bristol  
 Mr. Richard Hornbrook, Plymouth  
 Mr. William Hill, Plymouth

## J.

Rev. John James, Lloyd Jack, Cardigan  
 Mr. Thomas Jarman, Bristol  
 Edward Jeffries, Esq. Terrhill, near Taunton  
 Rev. Jacob Isaac, Moreton-Hampstead  
 Mr. W. P. Jillard, Oakhill  
 Mr. James Johnson, Bristol  
 Mr. Joseph Jackson, Plymouth  
 Rev. John Jones, Plymouth  
 Mr. Ambrose Johns, Plymouth

## K.

W. B. Kennaway, Esq. Exeter  
 Mr. Robert Kennaway, Bridgewater  
 Mrs. Kenrick, Exeter  
 Rev. John Kentish, Birmingham  
 Mr. George King, Bristol

## L.

Mr. Richard Lambert, Bristol



Mr. Samuel Lang, Tavistock

Mr. Samuel Lang, Bristol

Mr. Henry Llewellyn, Bristol

Mr. William Luddington, Bristol

### M.

Mr. J. Maningford, Bristol

Mr. William Matthews, Bath

Miss Morgan, Clifton

Mr. Thomas Morgan, Bristol

Mr. Samuel Morgan, Neath

\*John H. Mogridge, Esq. the Boyce, Gloucestershire

Mr. Thomas Mare, Plymouth

V. May, M. D. Plymouth Dock

Mr. Benjamin Mardon, Exeter

Mr. Mountjoy, Exeter

Mr. William Murch, Honiton

Mr. John Murch, Honiton

### N.

Mrs. Jane Noble, Taunton

Mr. W. Nettleton, Plymouth

Mr. Ambrose Nicholls, Stonelhouse

Mr. George Norrish, Moreton Hampstead

Mr. E. Nicholetts, Bridport

## O.

Mr. Thomas Osler, Bridgewater  
 Mr. Edward Oldrey, Plymouth  
 Mr. Edward Oldrey, Jun. Plymouth

## P.

Mr. Arthur Palmer, Jun. Bristol  
 Mr. Thomas Parsons, Bath  
 John Parsons, Esq. Upland-house, near Bridge-  
 water  
 Mr. Joseph Partridge, Stonehouse  
 Richard Perkins, Esq. Oakhill  
 Richard Perkins, Jun. Esq. Penmain, Monmouth-  
 shire  
 Mr. Joseph Powell, Exeter  
 Mr. William Price, Gloucester  
 Thomas Pyke, Esq. Bridgewater  
 Mr. Thomas Pyke, Jun. Bridgewater

## R.

Mr. Robert Rankin, Bristol  
 \*Mr. D. J. Rees, Lloyd Jack, Cardigan  
 Mr. Jacob Wilcox Ricketts, Bristol  
 Mr. Richard Ricketts, Jun. Bristol  
 Mr. Henry Ricketts, Bristol  
 Mr. Thomas Rossiter, Bristol

Mr. Gilbert Rotton, Froome  
 Rev. John Rowe, Bristol  
 Mr. Lawrence Rowe, Brentford  
 Mr. Ricards, Bath  
 Rev. Griffith Roberts, Warminster  
 Mr. Richard Rees, Plymouth  
 Mr. Thomas Reynell, Plymouth  
 Rev. Thomas Rees, London  
 Mr. John Rowland, Neath  
 Mr. John Richardson, Cirencester

## S.

Mrs. Scott, Birmingham  
 Mr. William Search, Cirencester  
 Mr. Joseph Sheppard, Froome  
 Mr. W. Y. Shepherd, Bristol  
 Mr. John Shute, Bristol  
 Mr. Stephen Shute, Collompton  
 Mrs. E. Smith, Easton Grey, near Tetbury  
 Mr. Samuel Stevens, Bridport  
 Rev. Henry Shute, Shepton Mallet  
 Mr. William Skone, Bristol  
 Samuel Sparks, Esq. Crewkerne  
 Mr. Samuel Sparks, Jun. Ditto  
 Mr. Benjamin Spencer, Bristol  
 J. E. Stock, M. D. Bristol  
 Mrs. Stratton, Bath



Mr. William Soady, Plymouth Dock  
 \*Mr. George Shute, Crediton  
 Mr. James Southwood, Plymouth  
 Mr. Stephen Shute, Jun. Crediton

## T.

Mr. Henry Talbot, Kidderminster  
 Mrs. George Talbot, Kidderminster  
 Mr. John Taylor, Tavistock  
 Rev. Dr. Toulmin, Birmingham  
 Mr. Henry Toye, Bristol  
 Mr. William Tricks, Exeter  
 Mr. M. C. Toulmin, Taunton  
 John Tingcombe, Esq. Plymouth

## W.

Mr. John Waldron, Trowbridge  
 Mr. Henry Wansey, Bath  
 Mr. Peter Warren, Warminster  
 Mr. George Warren, Warminster  
 Mr. Isaac Whitehouse, Tipton  
*Mr. Henry Wansey, Jun. Warminster*  
 Mr. Milford Windeatt, Totnes  
 Mr. John Woodward, Bristol  
 Mr. R. Vickery Wreford, Bristol  
 Miss Whiting, Pinney, near Lyme  
 Mr. Peter Welsford, Plymouth

Mr. Henry Welsford, Plymouth

Giles Welsford, Esq. Plymouth

John Waymouth, Esq. Newhouse near Exeter

Mr. Edward White, Moreton Hampstead

Y.

John Yerbury, Esq. Bristol

*M. L. Yeates, Esq. Exmouth*

---

\*• The subscribers are respectfully informed that the committee can, on no account, depart from the law which requires the nomination of books to be made within a given time ; it being unanimously resolved, at the general meeting at Exeter, that such law be strictly enforced.